

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning AB 264 without my signature as the bill is unnecessary. Existing law and regulations already require health plans to provide coverage for the treatment of asthma as well as effective health education services which include information regarding personal health behavior and health care. Health plans are already providing health education services to members who have pediatric asthma enrollees so another health care mandate is not needed.

Preventing and treating asthma has been an important priority for my Administration. In 2004, I signed AB 2185 (Frommer) to increase the availability and accessibility of essential medical equipment for children with asthma. I provided state funding through my 2005-06 and 2006-07 budgets to launch an expanded state effort to increase and improve California's response to asthma through local projects that work to improve the quality of clinical care, reduce asthma morbidity, and reduce/eliminate asthma health disparities for California children aged 0-18 years with asthma. My Administration has also worked to prevent and treat asthma through legislative and budget efforts to reduce air pollution, coordinating implementation of the state's strategic plan for asthma, and Medi-Cal requirements that health plans to provide organized programs, services, functions, and resources necessary to deliver asthma self-management education and training programs for enrollees.

I believe imposing a new mandate on health plans at this time will contribute to rising health care costs making health coverage more expensive and inaccessible to uninsured Californians. The cost of health care is rising at an alarming rate - not just in California but across the nation. I am concerned that without fundamental changes in the system, insurance coverage will become even less affordable for workers and employers. This is why I want to see a new health care paradigm that addresses affordability, shared responsibility and the promotion of healthy living. With my partners in the Legislature, I look forward in 2007 to working to develop a comprehensive and systemic approach to health care that supports cost containment, recognizes the shared responsibility of individuals, employers and government.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger